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Nashville District to Take Part in 'Corps Watch' Program

Nashville, Tenn. (May 9, 2006) — Nashville District, along with the other Great Lakes and Ohio River Districts, has joined "Corps Watch", a nationwide crime-watch deterrence program to protect Corps of Engineers property. Each year, millions of dollars are lost due to property damage from vandalism, larceny, arson and environmental and cultural degradation. This program is designed to heighten public awareness of the seriousness of the impacts of crime within or around dams, lakes, locks, recreation areas and other Corps of Engineers facilities.

Those facilities include all Corps property at the following lakes: J. Percy Priest Lake, Old Hickory Lake, Cheatham Lake, Center Hill Lake, Cordell Hull Lake, Dale Hollow Lake, Lake Barkley, Lake Cumberland, Martins Fork Lake and Laurel River Lake.

Pittsburgh District, now the National Operations Center for the Corps Watch program, reported a reduction in criminal activity at its 16 flood control projects and 23 locks and dams during the past two years, while serving as the program's pilot test site.

The Corps Watch initiative is modeled after successful programs developed by the Bureau of Reclamation, Bonneville Power Administration and other crime-watch programs. Authorized by Section 205 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 and the Economy Act (31 U.S.C. 1535), national funding is available to issue rewards of up to \$1,000 to individuals for information leading to the arrest and prosecution of offenders, as well as to develop a marketing plan and procure publicity materials including brochures and billboards.

Corps Watch uses a 24-hour-a-day toll-free hotline that assures the identity of the caller is protected and the proper authorities are notified. Anyone who observes, or has knowledge of, theft, vandalism, or any other threat or suspicious activity against Corps property need only dial 1(866)413-7970 to report that information.

While it's impossible to say how many crimes have been prevented just by the establishment of the program and placement of posters, Stephen Davidson, the Pittsburgh program administrator, said 30 calls have been taken under the Pittsburgh program, five cases have been solved, and rewards have been paid to three individuals.

"Fines levied and property recovered have amounted to about \$10,000," said Davidson.